

Veterans' Healthy Living

VA New England Healthcare System

Spring 2006

On the ***MOVE!***
with Veterans

Extreme
Lifestyles

Diabetes
Q & A



Message From the Director



Jeannette Chirico-Post, M.D.

The most important member of your health care team is YOU. We have a partnership. An important component in meeting our mission of providing the highest quality health care is providing education to you and your family or caregivers about the factors that influence your health. In doing so, we are empowering you to become an active participant in your own care. The focus of the new Department of Health and Human Services and VA initiative called *HealthierUS Veterans* is to educate veterans and their families about the health risks of obesity and diabetes.

In this issue of *Veterans' Healthy Living*, you'll read how patients with diabetes play a very important role in successfully managing their conditions by controlling what they eat, getting regular exercise, and monitoring their blood glucose levels. In addition, you will learn how the VA is using home health technology devices to assist patients with diabetes.

You will also learn about VA's new MOVE (Managing Overweight and/or Obesity for Veterans Everywhere) program that is now available to veterans at all of our facilities. Each individually tailored MOVE plan emphasizes nutrition, physical activity, and behavior changes — actively involving you in the ongoing management of your health.

We continue to work actively to develop our Strategic Plan to meet the needs of New England's veterans. The current plan is posted on our Web site at: www.visn1.med.va.gov/. We welcome your comments. In addition, our 2005 Network Annual Report is now posted on the Web site for your review.

We have compiled the responses from the *Veterans' Healthy Living* survey from the Fall 2005 issue. More than 2000 comment cards were received with suggestions for health topics. Diabetes, exercise and weight control were among the top ten topics veterans wanted to learn more about. I am happy to announce that Loren Bressor, a veteran from West Granby, Conn., is the winner of the \$50 VA Canteen gift certificate. For more information on the survey results, turn to page 7.

Remember that the most important member of your health care team is you. Working together with your health care providers, you can make a difference in your overall health and well-being.

We wish you and your families a healthy and happy summer!

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Jeannette Chirico-Post".

Jeannette Chirico-Post, M.D.
Network Director

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On the **MOVE!** with Veterans

If you are one of the 68 percent of female veterans and 75 percent of male veterans who are overweight and receiving care in VA medical facilities, you know how difficult weight control can be. And if you are one of the 37 percent of women and 33 percent of men considered obese, you know the health problems that can be attributed to obesity. If you belong to any of these groups, the VA wants to help you to MOVE!

MOVE (Managing Overweight and/or Obesity for Veterans Everywhere) is a weight management program developed by the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention to help deal with the growing concerns about obesity as a significant health care problem and a growing health care cost – over 100 billion dollars annually.

The BMI, or Body Mass Index, is the chief tool in determining whether you are overweight or obese. Your BMI is a measure of your weight in relation to your height. Your health care professional can help you determine your own BMI. A BMI of 25 to 29.9 means you are overweight, while a BMI of 30 or more indicates obesity. Your waist measurement is also important. As a general rule, your risk of heart disease, diabetes, or other weight-related problems increases if you are a woman with a waist over 35 inches or a man with a waist measurement over 40 inches.

Managing your weight is not easy and it requires lifestyle and attitude changes. Deciding to change and taking those first steps to get help is sometimes the hardest part of weight management. MOVE is designed to help veterans enrolled in the VA health care system take those first steps.

How is MOVE different from other weight loss programs? The program is not a “fad” or “lose-it-overnight” diet, but is based on the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute’s Clinical Guide-

lines on the Identification, Evaluation and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults. The program emphasizes health and not looks. It is tailored to your individual needs. It provides guidance on nutrition and physical activity, emphasizing a long term change in habits and lifestyle.

The MOVE program is available at all of our facilities to veterans enrolled in the VA health care system. To enroll in MOVE, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire to help your health care provider develop a plan designed specifically for your needs. You will also receive printed information tailored just for you. Your health care team will then meet with you to set goals for your program and will follow up with you to provide support and to answer questions and address concerns.

If you are interested in learning more about the MOVE program, visit your local VA health care facility, consult your Primary Care physician or visit the MOVE Web site at <http://www.move.va.gov>. Meanwhile, take that first step to becoming healthier and more fit by accessing the questionnaire at <http://www.move.va.gov/move23/register.asp>.



The VA Connecticut Healthcare System MOVE Team includes (left to right): John Sellinger, health psychology intern; Vera Carbone, RN; Lisa Frantsve, PhD, health psychology; Laurie Bucci, clinical dietitian; and Dr. Christopher Ruser, medical director of MOVE for VA Connecticut. Photo by Richard Thompson



Extreme Lifestyles

Few would argue that American lifestyles have changed dramatically in recent decades. Busy families today with *too much* stress and *too little* time will often eat *too much* fast food and get *too little* exercise. These extremes – too much of some things and too little of other things – leave us overweight and out of shape.

This type of lifestyle triggers extremes inside the body, too. When you eat, sugar and starches are converted into glucose and absorbed into the bloodstream. Insulin then helps that glucose get from the bloodstream to the rest of your body so you have energy. But if your body can't produce enough insulin to handle all of the sugars you consume or simply decides to ignore the insulin, you're left with high levels of glucose drifting around in your bloodstream. The result is diabetes and the potential problems that accompany it: blindness, kidney disease, nerve damage, heart disease and stroke.

According to the American Diabetes Association, over 20 million people in the United States have diabetes, but nearly 1/3 of them aren't even aware of it!

Even worse, they estimate that 41 million Americans between the ages of 40-74 have pre-diabetes, a condition that occurs when a person's glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as having type 2 diabetes.

The good news is that people with pre-diabetes can delay or prevent type 2 diabetes from ever developing without having to make extreme lifestyle changes. Instead, simple modifications to diet and exercise are often enough to get your body back on track. For many people, dropping even 10-15 pounds can make a difference.

Dreaded 'D' Word

If you associate the word DIET with hunger, avoid that word! Instead, merely consider healthier eating habits a CHANGE, and the change doesn't have to be painful. Small things can make a big impact, and here are a few of them:

- ➔ Limit your daily calories by continuing to eat your favorite foods but decreasing portion size, which also helps lower glucose levels.
- ➔ Alter your shopping habits. Buy fresh fruits even if you don't intend to eat them. Having apples

and bananas on hand at least increases the odds you'll grab one of those instead of a candy bar.

- ➔ If you lead a busy lifestyle, cook more of a healthy dish than what you'll eat in one sitting. Store leftovers in the freezer for a quick and wholesome meal when you don't have time to make one.
- ➔ Prepare a large bowl of tossed salad twice a week. It's a fast and easy addition to your plate.
- ➔ Ask your primary care provider to recommend a dietitian who can teach you to read food labels, offer creative ways to make your favorite foods more nutritious and suggest ways to eat healthy.

Easy Exercises

Forget extremes! Exercising to control pre-diabetes doesn't necessarily have to be strenuous. Walking at a modest pace for 30 minutes a day is ideal, but any activity that increases your heart rate is better than sitting on a sofa. Mowing the lawn, walking the back nine instead of renting a golf cart or playing softball with the grandkids are all forms of enjoyable exercise. Do what you like, but do something!

Not only will exercise burn calo-

ries and help shed excess weight, it also causes your body to properly absorb the glucose you consume and burn it as energy. If glucose is absorbed or burned, it won't accumulate in your bloodstream and nudge you into the pre-diabetes category. As a bonus, moderate exercise strengthens your bones and heart, raises your good cholesterol levels, increases your energy level, helps you sleep better and keeps you flexible.

Keep it Simple

Rather than implementing drastic changes that you won't adhere to,

challenge yourself to walk 30 minutes twice a week in the beginning rather than jogging five miles per day. Set realistic weight loss goals, too. Resolve to lose three pounds in two weeks rather than 50 pounds by next month.

Speak to your health care provider about a simple blood test to determine your risk for pre-diabetes. Remember, properly managing it can prevent you from ever developing the more serious type 2 diabetes. With a few minor lifestyle changes, you'll look better, feel better and live longer. Now THAT is extreme!

Recipe

Spicy Salsa Chicken Grill

Ingredients:

1/3 cup fresh lime juice
2 tsp fresh minced chives
2 tsp minced ginger
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 Tbsp olive oil
2 tsp chili powder
1 cup hot salsa
1 1/2 pounds boneless,
skinless chicken breasts

Number of Servings: 6

Serving Size: 3-4 oz.

Nutrition information per serving

Calories 158
Calories From Fat 47
Total Fat 5 g
Saturated Fat 1 g
Cholesterol 69 mg
Sodium 78 mg
Total Carbohydrate 1 g
Dietary Fiber 0 g
Sugars 1 g
Protein 25 g

In a small saucepan, mix together the lime juice, chives, ginger, and garlic. Add the olive oil and chili powder and heat to boiling over medium heat. Stir in the salsa. Allow sauce to cool. Place chicken in a plastic bag. Add the sauce and let marinate in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours or up to 24 hours.

Prepare an outside grill with an oiled rack set 4 inches above the heat source. On a gas grill, set the heat to high. Grill the chicken breasts for 3-4 minutes on each side, turning once and basting with extra marinade, until the chicken is cooked through.

Recipe source: *More Diabetic Meals in 30 Minutes - Or Less*, published by the American Diabetes Association.



Additional Resources

Contact your local
VA facility or log on to
<http://www1.va.gov/diabetes/#veterans>

American Diabetes Association
Phone: 1-800-DIABETES
(1-800-342-2383)
Internet: www.diabetes.org

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
Phone: 1-800-CDC-INFO
Internet: www.cdc.gov/diabetes

National Diabetes
Information Clearinghouse
Phone: 1-800-860-8747
Internet:
<http://www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/>

National Diabetes
Education Program (NDEP)
Phone: 1-800-438-5383
Internet: www.ndep.nih.gov

My HealthVet
Internet: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

Healthfinder
Internet: <http://www.healthfinder.gov/>

PLEASE . . . Don't be a “No Show”

**We need your help to
reduce “no shows.”**

Next time you can't make your health care appointment, call and let us know as soon as possible. This will help us maximize productivity, improve access to services and ensure the best possible scheduling practices.

Here's how you can help:

- ☒ If you cannot keep your scheduled appointment, always call to cancel as soon as possible. This will allow us to offer that appointment to another veteran!
- ☒ Please inform us of changes in your address or phone number.
- ☒ Understand the impact of no shows on our resources.

Thanks for your help!

Questions and Answers

Diabetes Q&A

I've just been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. I knew it ran in my family, but I didn't take better care of myself over the years. How can I improve my health?

A diabetes diagnosis may trigger unexpected emotions. While feeling angry or blaming yourself is normal, it isn't helpful, according to Helen Gomes, diabetes education coordinator for the VA Boston Healthcare System. "Genetics plays a large part in diabetes and your genes are a fact of life. If a family member had diabetes complications and lost a limb, went blind or required dialysis, your risk of those complications is higher. But with proper care and management of your diabetes, you can beat those odds and not have it happen to you."

Rather than look back at what you might have done differently, Gomes encourages you to realize you're better off knowing you have diabetes. "Once diagnosed, at least you have a fighting chance and the ability to make lifestyle changes that will improve your health and reduce your risk of complications."

Denial is also common among the newly diagnosed, but it may actually be your way of coping with the news initially and gradually accepting it. Continued denial, however – telling yourself that *one bite won't hurt or I don't have time to test right now* – can pose serious health risks.

Talk to your doctor if you experience any of the following for more than two weeks:

- ✓ Feeling sad, nervous or guilty.
- ✓ Inability to accept your diagnosis.
- ✓ Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping more than usual.
- ✓ Eating considerably more or

less than you did prior to your diagnosis.

- ✓ Problems concentrating, constant worry or trouble making decisions.

My primary care provider referred me to a dietitian. What is a dietitian and how can he/she help me?

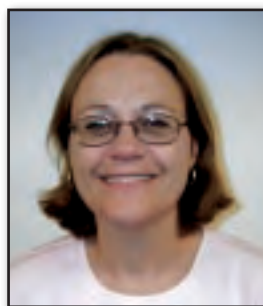
A dietitian is a specially trained professional that is an integral part of your diabetes health care team. He/she can explain how food works inside your body, why it's important to make good food choices, and how to make smart selections when eating out or attending special events. Besides teaching you to recognize foods and ingredients that are healthy for you, a dietitian can show you how to read food labels, provide tasty recipes or help locate appropriate cookbooks and help personalize an eating plan based on your desired weight, lifestyle and medication. If you're carrying a few extra pounds, a dietitian can help you lose reasonable amounts of weight over a long period of time.

Besides my doctor, what resources do I have for learning about diabetes?

The more you know about diabetes, the more in control you'll feel. Be careful about where you acquire the information, though. "Like all of our VISN 1 facilities, our VA Boston Healthcare System diabetes education program is accredited through the American Diabetes Association

and must meet very stringent standards," says Gomes. "If your local VA facility doesn't offer a formal program, contact the American Diabetes Association to find a source in your community. Well-meaning friends and neighbors may want to share their experiences," she adds, "but ignore their advice about how to take insulin, manage blood sugar, etc."

Remember, diabetes is not a death sentence. On the contrary, the diagnosis may have saved your life! Learn all you can about it from credible sources, follow the advice of your primary care provider, and bravely go forth to beat the odds!



Helen Gomes, MSN, APRN, is a Certified Diabetes Educator and a Board Certified Advanced Diabetes Manager at the VA Boston Healthcare System.

COMMON DIABETES MYTHS

Myth #1

Diabetes is contagious.

Myth #2

People with diabetes should never eat sweets or chocolate.

Myth #3

Eating large amounts of sugar causes diabetes.

Myth #4

People with diabetes should eat special diabetic or dietetic foods.

Myth #5

Insulin causes weight gain so you shouldn't take it.

Network Strategic Plan and Annual Report Available on the Internet

The Network Strategic Plan 2006-2010 is now available on the VISN 1 Internet. The Strategic Plan demonstrates how Network 1 expects to achieve its commitment to meeting the health care needs of its veteran population. In addition, the Network Annual Report was recently released. The report highlights the Network's significant accomplishments in fiscal year 2005 and represents an objective measure of the high quality health care provided for our veterans.

To view the Strategic Plan and Annual Report, go to: www.visn1.med.va.gov/.

Veterans' Healthy Living Survey Results

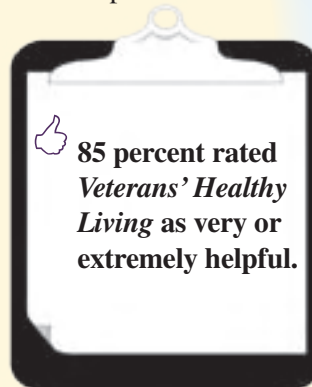
More than 2,000 veterans responded to the Fall 2005 *Veterans' Healthy Living* survey. Below is a summary of the results, which will be used to develop future issues.

Top 10 health topics:

- ▶ Heart problems
- ▶ Diabetes
- ▶ Prostate
- ▶ Arthritis
- ▶ High blood pressure
- ▶ Exercise/fitness
- ▶ Weight control
- ▶ Eye care
- ▶ Cholesterol
- ▶ Medications

Top 5 services of interest:

- ▶ Benefits: Medicare vs. VA
- ▶ Medication costs: Medicare Part D vs. VA
- ▶ Long-term care
- ▶ Access to care
- ▶ Dental benefits



The Right Technology for the Right Veteran

Approximately 20 percent of our nation's veterans have a diagnosis of diabetes. To address the issue of providing state-of-the-art medical care, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is leading our nation in bringing support and medical care into the homes of veterans with diabetes and other chronic illnesses. The VHA Care Coordination/Home Telehealth Program is a new program designed to improve the overall coordination of care and allows veterans and VA providers to collaborate more closely in the management of chronic diseases, through the use of in-home monitoring devices.

The basic goal of the Care Coordination/Home Telehealth Program is to keep veterans at home by combining education and monitoring as the key to early detection and prevention of complications that might lead to hospitalization. The motto of the Care Coordination/Home Telehealth program is "the right care at the right time in the right place." These home check-ups are done by using simple pieces of equipment such as the "Health Buddy," which sends information on your condition to your



care coordinator using your home telephone line. The "Health Buddy" is a countertop device that has four buttons used for answering questions about your medical condition that appear on a small screen. The "Health Buddy" sends the veteran's blood sugar levels, weight or other important information directly over a secure Internet Web site to the VA Medical Center where he/she is being followed. The Care Coordinator at the local facility alerts the health care provider of the need for any follow up. Besides transmitting data, the "Health Buddy" provides coaching and education on issues such as diet, medications and activity levels for patients with chronic illnesses to help you to learn more about your illness.

Ask your VA provider for more information about how you can take advantage of this exciting technology to improve your health.

Where to find us



VA MEDICAL CENTERS

CONNECTICUT

**VA CONNECTICUT
HEALTHCARE SYSTEM**
Newington Campus
555 Willard Avenue
Newington, CT 06111
(860) 666-6951

West Haven Campus
950 Campbell Avenue
West Haven, CT 06516
(203) 932-5711

MAINE

TOGUS VA MEDICAL CENTER
1 VA Center
Augusta, ME 04330
(207) 623-8411
(within the Augusta area)
(877) 421-8263
(outside the Augusta area)

MASSACHUSETTS
**EDITH NOURSE ROGERS
VETERANS MEMORIAL HOSP.**
200 Springs Road
Bedford, MA 01730
(781) 275-7500

**VA BOSTON
HEALTHCARE SYSTEM**
Brockton Campus
940 Belmont Street
Brockton, MA 02301
(508) 583-4500

Jamaica Plain Campus
150 S. Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02130
(617) 232-9500

West Roxbury Campus
1400 VFW Parkway
West Roxbury, MA 02132
(617) 323-7700

**NORTHAMPTON VA
MEDICAL CENTER**
421 North Main Street
Leeds, MA 01053
(413) 584-4040

NEW HAMPSHIRE
**MANCHESTER VA
MEDICAL CENTER**
718 Smyth Road
Manchester, NH 03104
(603) 624-4366
(800) 892-8384

RHODE ISLAND
**PROVIDENCE VA
MEDICAL CENTER**
830 Chalkstone Avenue
Providence, RI 02908
(401) 273-7100
(877) 417-9421

VERMONT
**WHITE RIVER JUNCTION
VA MEDICAL CENTER**
215 North Main Street
White River Junction,
VT 05009
(802) 295-9363

COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS

CONNECTICUT

DANBURY CBOC
7 Germantown Road
Danbury, CT 06810
(203) 798-8422

NEW LONDON CBOC
U.S. Coast Guard Academy
15 Mohegan Avenue
New London, CT 06320
(860) 437-3611

STAMFORD CBOC
Stamford Health System
1275 Summer Street
Stamford, CT 06904
(203) 325-0649

WATERBURY CBOC
133 Scovill Street, Suite 203
Waterbury, CT 06706
(203) 465-5292

WINDHAM CBOC
96 Mansfield Street
Willimantic, CT 06226
(860) 450-7583

WINSTED CBOC
115 Spencer Street
Winsted, CT 06098
(860) 738-6985

MAINE

BANGOR CBOC
304 Hancock Street, Suite 3B
Bangor, ME 04401
(207) 561-3600

CALAIS CBOC
50 Union Street
Calais, ME 04619
(207) 904-3700

CARIBOU CBOC
163 Van Buren Road, Suite 6
Caribou, ME 04736
(207) 493-3800

RUMFORD CBOC
431 Franklin Street
Rumford, ME 04276
(207) 369-3200

SACO CBOC
655 Main Street
Saco, ME 04072
(207) 294-3100

MASSACHUSETTS
CAUSEWAY STREET CBOC
251 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 248-1000

DORCHESTER

895 Blue Hill Avenue
Dorchester, MA 02121
(617) 822-7146

FITCHBURG CBOC

275 Nichols Road
Fitchburg, MA 01420
(978) 342-9781

FRAMINGHAM CBOC
61 Lincoln Street, Suite 112
Framingham, MA 01702
(508) 628-0205

GLOUCESTER CBOC
298 Washington Street
Gloucester, MA 01930
(978) 282-0676

GREENFIELD CBOC
51 Sanderson Street
Greenfield, MA 01301
(413) 773-8428

HAVERHILL CBOC
108 Merrimack Street
Haverhill, MA 01830
(978) 372-5207

HYANNIS CBOC
145 Falmouth Road
Hyannis, MA 02601
(508) 771-3190

LOWELL CBOC
130 Marshall Road
Lowell, MA 01852
(978) 671-9000

LYNN CBOC
225 Boston Street, Suite 107
Lynn, MA 01904
(781) 595-9818

NEW BEDFORD CBOC
174 Elm Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
(508) 994-0217

PITTSFIELD CBOC
73 Eagle Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 443-4857

QUINCY CBOC
114 Whitwell Street
Quincy, MA 02169
(617) 376-2010

SPRINGFIELD CBOC
25 Bond Street
Springfield, MA 01104
(413) 731-6000

WORCESTER CBOC

605 Lincoln Street
Worcester, MA 01605
(508) 856-0104

NEW HAMPSHIRE

CONWAY CBOC

7 Greenwood Avenue
Conway, NH 03818
(603) 447-2555

LITTLETON CBOC

Littleton Regional Hospital
600 St. Johnsbury Road
Littleton, NH 03561
(603) 444-9328

PORTSMOUTH CBOC

302 Newmarket Street
Portsmouth, NH 03803
(603) 624-4366, ext. 5500
(800) 892-8384, ext. 5500

SOMERSWORTH CBOC

200 Route 108
Somersworth, NH 03878
(603) 624-4366, ext. 5700
(800) 892-8384, ext. 5700

TILTON CBOC

NH State Veterans Home
139 Winter Street
Tilton, NH 03276
(603) 624-4366, ext. 5600
(800) 892-8384, ext. 5600

RHODE ISLAND

MIDDLETOWN CBOC

One Corporate Place
Middletown, RI 02842
(401) 847-6239

VERMONT

BENNINGTON CBOC

Vermont Veterans Home
325 North Street
Bennington, VT 05201
(802) 447-6913

COLCHESTER CBOC

162 Hegeman Ave., Unit 100
Colchester, VT 05444
(802) 655-1356

RUTLAND CBOC

215 Stratton Road
Rutland, VT 05702
(802) 773-3386

Veterans' Healthy Living

VISN 1 Communications
Department of Veterans Affairs
200 Springs Road
Bedford, MA 01730